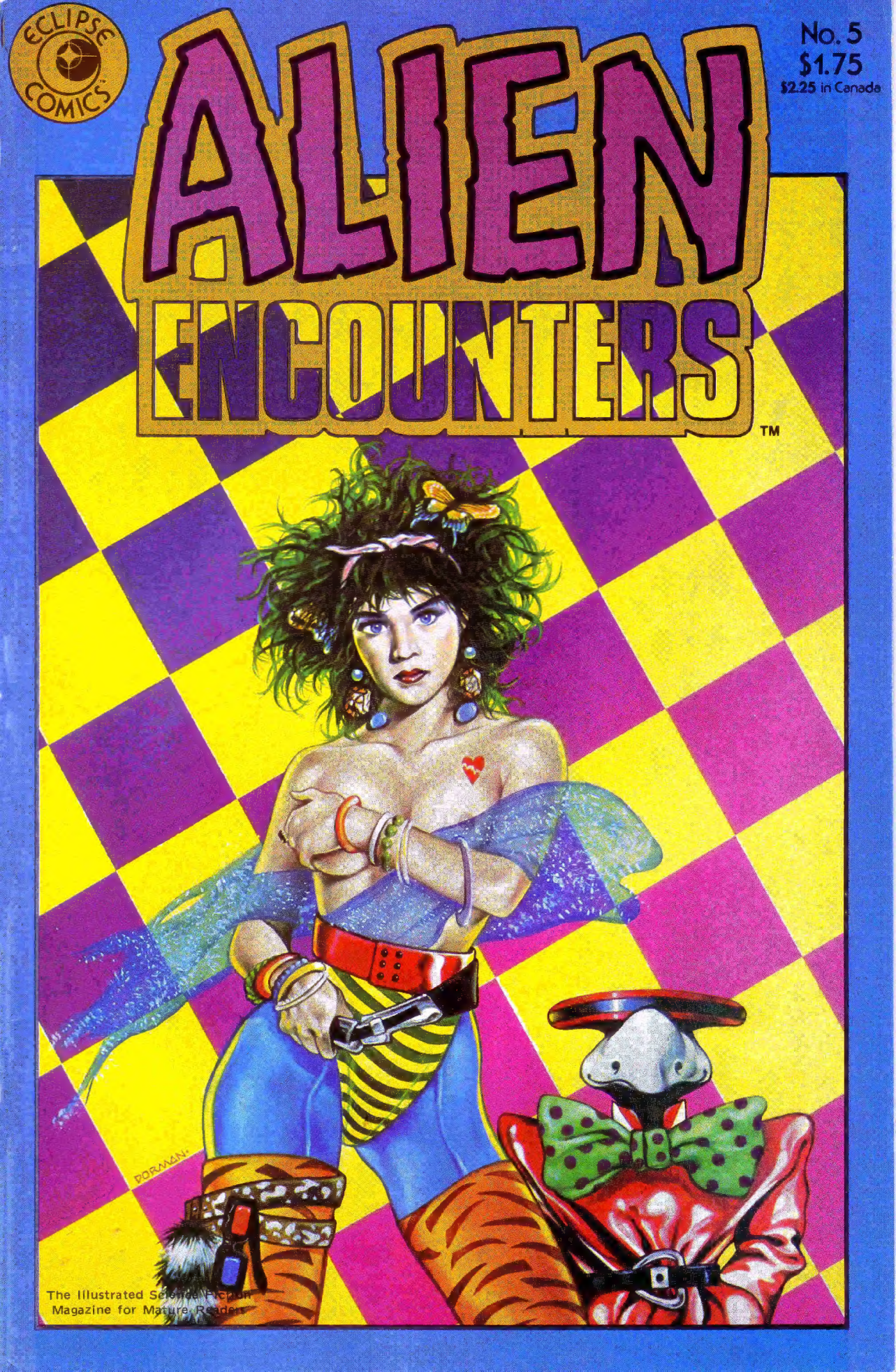
ECLIPSE COMICS
ALIEN ENCOUNTERS
No. 5
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The Illustrated Science Fiction Magazine for Mature Readers

The PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

ON THE RACKS

SCOUT no. 4
The National Guard surrounds the President in the Astrodome, and 1999's going haywire!

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS no. 5
The incredible Richard Corben makes his Eclipse debut! Plus, Bill Wray and Chuck Beckum!

THE DOOM PATROL INDEX no. 1 and 2
Before The New Teen Titans, there was The Doom Patrol! A special 2-part, must-have series!

MR. MONSTER no. 5
Doc Stearn battles a giant flesh-eating amoeba that decides to adopt Mr. Monster as his 'daddy!'

THE TWISTED TALES OF BRUCE JONES no. 1 and 2
The name of this 4-issue Micro Series tells it all! Bruce Jones has put together some of his greatest efforts, including some never-before published gems!

THE MASKED MAN no. 8
The second half of what may be the most momentous tale in the Masked Man's life. Don't miss "Roxy."

SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT! no. 4
Back for more! Ray Bradbury's "The Foghorn" is adapted! Plus, Alex Toth, Nick Cardy and others!

THE NEW DNAgents no. 6
The Agents attempt to return their lives to normality, but too many things get in the way.

LASER ERASER no. 4
Mysta and Axel travel to the rim planets to clean out a nest of space pirates in "Death!"

MIRACLEMAN no. 6
At last! The answer to the question everyone's been asking for over two years — what happens to Miracledog! New stories begin!

STUDS WOULD UNDERSTAND: When i asked for people who read our comics to write me a few lines telling who they are and what they do for a living, i really didn't know i'd get so many replies! True to my word, i will run excerpts from everyone's letters. This is you, people — you who make it possible for me to work in comics. And i thank you:

GREG FLEMING-WOLFE, Saint Paul, Minnesota is "a house-husband/musician, father of two (16 months and 1 month)." His wife is a law student. He enjoys "several of the Eclipse titles," and seems particularly fond of Tim Truman's stuff. Greg asks me to do a "tell-all" column on myself ("Are you English? Are you married (to Dean M.)? Besides lounging in hot springs, what do you do for relaxation?").

Okay, briefly, Greg, i am ethnically half Sicilian (maiden name Manfredi) and half German Jewish (mother's maiden name Erlanger). I'm not married, but Curly Dino is my partner in business and in bed, to put it delicately and with extreme grace. I have a 14 year old daughter, Althaea, from a previous partnership, from whence also sprang the made-up couple-name Yronwode. (His maiden name was Paskin.) In addition to hot springing, i relax by watching old b&w movies, collecting old 78 rpm records, and producing Collectible Plastics, a bi-monthly newsletter for those who, like Dean and me, are accumulators of phenol formaldehyde artifacts from the inter-War period. Oh yes, and i also collect old love comics, and Fiesta dinnerware, and Mission style furniture and art deco style novelties, and illustrated children's books from the 1920s-30s. And Dino collects all of that stuff too, plus he also is into 1939-40 New York World's Fair items. And i collect fruit crate labels. And we both collect 1930s linen-finish postcards depicting neat old buildings and theaters. And we love to drive around the country taking photos of streamlined buildings, and buying obscure phenol formaldehyde jewelry and junk. Further details on request. And now back to you guys!

SAM HAZELRIG, Tampa, Florida, actually took me up on my offer to come visit the office here in Guerneville! He is a food broker for Dulin Brokers in Tampa. What he does is almost exactly the same thing for food that a comic book direct sales distributor does for comics. He describes himself as "the ultimate middle man — currently looking for a line of slug slime." (That last is in reference to the late, lamented AZTEC ACE, one of his favourite comics.) In truth, Sam calls up Safeway stores and asks them if they're out of Niblets canned corn. He gave us a t-shirt that advertises Tampa as the Guava capital of the United States, which i guess it is. We gave him a free comic in return.

DAVID A. J. McGLONE, San Jose, California, is "a software technician and junior software developer at Tandem Computers, [and] also a student at San Jose State College."

STEPHEN COLLINS, Abington, Pennsylvania, is "an assistant pressman for an offset printing plant called Spectra Graphics." He says this shop "doesn't print comics, at least not yet, but you never know what the future might bring." Stephen likes the idea of learning about Eclipsoids. "I think it will be neat to find out what everyone does." Me too, Stephen. Stay tuned to this station for more info!

catherine yronwode

IN YOUR HANDS

We're very happy to welcome the internationally acclaimed Richard Corben to our pages. His story which follows immediately is a true alien encounter. We also have another gem from David Lloyd, whose "Man in the Fog" met with great response in TALES OF TERROR recently. Plus, David Dorman's 'Casa Blanco,' which is the story behind this issue's cover! And . . . Tim Burgard and Chuck Beckum round it all out!

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS no. 5, February 1986. Published by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446. Catherine Yronwode, Editor. Dean Mullaney, Publisher. Cover art ©1986 David Dorman. "Night of the Monkey" ©1986 Simon Revelstroke & Richard Corben. "Casa Blanco" ©1986 David Dorman & Craig Boldman. Cover art ©1986 David Dorman. "Another Man's Shoes" ©1986 Tim Burgard & Chuck Beckum. Journal of a Space Traveller" ©1986 David Lloyd. All other material ©1986 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. *Alien Encounters* is a trademark of Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. The stories, characters and events in this magazine are fictional. Film by SM Graphics. Printed in Canada.

NIGHT OF THE MONKEY
NYARO OF THE NUBA EMERGES FROM THE SMOKY DARKNESS OF THE DAGON HUT. THE CHANT IS OVER, THE VISIONS BANISHED- BUT IN HIS HEAD HE HEARS THE BLOOD STILL SINGING, AND ...
HO, PALE APE! BACK TO YOUR DUNG PEN! ONLY CHAMPIONS CAN WALK HERE. NO BEASTS ALLOWED!
OWW! WATCH OUT!
KADUMA! SAVE YOUR STICK FOR A WORTHIER OPPONENT! LET RUBA SAN BE. HE BELONGS TO ME.
©1985 SIMON REVELSTROKE AND RICHARD CORBEN
NYARO THE TALKER! YOU CHATTER LIKE YOUR MONKEY HERE. I'M A BETTER FIGHTER THAN YOU, BUT I DO NOT THINK YOU RESPECT ME ENOUGH.
SIR, DON'T FIGHT FOR ME!
AH, KADUNDOR KADUMA SHOWS GLIMMERINGS OF WISDOM, ACCIDENTALLY GAINED , NO DOUBT. YOU FORGET WHO'S THE MASTER OF THE ZUAR-RING. KADUMA. YOU NEED A REMINDER.
WELL PUT , NYARO. SO LET'S PLAY THE BLOOD GAME NOW. I'LL DEAL WITH YOUR PET LATER. AND I SHALL LAY CLAIM TO ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS, INCLUDING YOUR SACRED SPEAR, AND YOUR BETROTHED, YAMILA.

THE SUN GLARES DOWN LIKE THE ORB OF A BALEFUL GOD AS THE TWO FIGHTERS ENTER THE RING AND ADVANCE UNTIL THEIR SHADOWS TOUCH AT ITS CENTER.
BEGIN!
HA! HA! COME FOR IT, NYARO!
KLAK
THOK!
THWAP!
PERHAPS I'LL LET YOU LIVE TO SERVE MY DOGS!
KLAK
VOOOOM
UNK!
SMAK!
SWOK
HI-YA! FIRST BLOOD -- ACCEPT IT, CRUEL GODS!

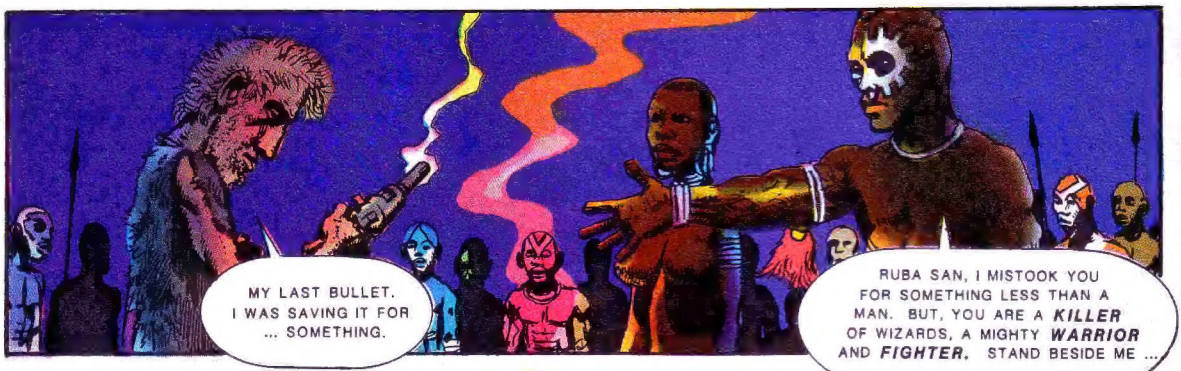
NOW...
I'LL SUMMON THE WIZARD MALLE, AND I SHALL GIVE HIM YOUR MONKEY ...
I'LL TAKE YAMILA TO MY HUT, NYARO, AND WHEN I'VE FINISHED WITH HER, I'LL GIVE HER TO MALLE TOO! HE'LL REWARD ME FOR SUCH A PRIZE.
EEEEEEERGH!
KRAK!
THUMPH
NYARO!
NYARO!
WHY, NYARO? WHY DID YOU BOTHER?

THE DRUMS THROB LIKE A GIANT'S HEARTBEAT IN THE NIGHT. THEY MAKE THE SKIN TINGLE, THE LOINS TIGHTEN, THE BLOOD BOIL. IN HIS HUT THE BATTERED CHAMPION PAUSES IN THE CEREMONIAL DECORATION OF HIS BODY.
WHY DID YOU SAVE ME? I AM LESS THAN A BEAST IN THE EYES OF YOUR TRIBE. KADUMA WOULD HAVE KILLED ME, AND MY TROUBLES WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER.
RUBA SAN, RUBA SAN -- KADUMA WAS A FOOL, AND NOW HE CAN NO LONGER HARM THAT WHICH IS MINE. DO I NOT FEED YOU WELL? NOW TAKE YOUR .. TOY AND GO. THIS NIGHT IS FOR NYARO AND HIS WOMAN.
ALONE ... ALONE AGAIN.
KA-CHING KA-CHING KA-CHING
O-WEI, O-WEI, O-WEI,
THE BOOL, THE DANCE OF LOVE, BEGINS ...
THE DRUMS ...
... THRUM ...
... LOUDER.

YAMILA, LET US GO BELOW THE GROUND AND BECOME ONE WITH THE NIGHT FOR A TIME. I HAVE THE GRI-GRI AMULET.
BUT EVEN AS THE TWO LOVERS DEPART, THE AIR SHIMMERS AND STIRS BEHIND THEM.

HEE! HEE! ANOTHER WOULD EMBRACE YOUR BELOVED THIS NIGHT, NYARO. KADUMA PROMISED HER TO ME ...
KADUMA IS *DEAD!*
NEVERTHELESS SHE IS MINE BY HIS BLOOD OATH! GIVE HER TO ME.
BEWARE MY WRATH! REFUSE AND I SHALL VISIT THE UNSPEAKABLE UPON YOU.
SET FOOT UPON THE GROUND AND I SHALL *SMITE* YOU, WIZARD!
YOU *HURT* ME, NYARO? HEE! HEE! WITH WHAT? YOUR LIMBS ARE AS BONELESS AS A SERPENT'S. BOILS ASSAIL YOU.
NOW, NYARO - WHERE IS YOUR VAUNTED STRENGTH? WHY, EVEN THE EARTH WILL NO LONGER SUPPORT YOU.
SAY IT NYARO, BEFORE YOU DIE. TELL YOUR FRIENDS COWERING IN THE NIGHT. *MALLE* IS THE MIGHTIEST OF MEN. THE MAGIC OF *MALLE* IS UNBEATABLE. SAY IT, TOAD, OR I'LL CRUSH YOUR SKULL!
R-R-RUN, *YAMILA!*
KRAK!
WHAA ... ? *YOU!*
GO BACK TO YOUR HOLE, WIZARD - OR WHEREVER IT IS YOU CRAWLED FROM.
RUBA SAN, RUN!

SO NYARO'S MONKEY HAS FANGS. WELL, BURN MONKEY! BURN AND SIZZLE!
FZZZZZZF!
MY THIRD EYE SEES YOU SNEAKING UP, NYARO. NOW, LIMBLESS, A BAG OF HELPLESS FLESH SHALL YOU ROT ...
AAAH!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
KA CHING KA CHING
EH? STILL ALIVE?
YOU - YOU CALL THAT MAGIC, MALLÉ? WELL, TRY THIS MAGIC FROM MY WORLD!
BLAM!
SUDDEN THUNDER ECHOES DOWN THE NIGHT, FADING, FADING UNTIL IT PASSES OVER THE HORIZON WHERE FAR LIGHTNINGS FLICKER.


MY LAST BULLET. I WAS SAVING IT FOR ... SOMETHING.
RUBA SAN, I MISTOOK YOU FOR SOMETHING LESS THAN A MAN. BUT, YOU ARE A KILLER OF WIZARDS, A MIGHTY WARRIOR AND FIGHTER. STAND BESIDE ME ...

BROTHER!
... BROTHER?

HERE. I WON'T NEED THIS ANYMORE.

EPILOGUE

TDE

CAPTAIN JACK ROBINSON HERE. FINAL REPORT TO TRANS-DIMENSIONAL ENTERPRISES. DATE AND LOCATION UNKNOWN - CALL IT ... SOMEPLACE ELSE.
I CAN'T REPAIR THE CRAFT, AND THE PORTAL REMAINS CLOSED. I KNOW THAT NO ONE WILL COME FOR ME NOW, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER, YOU SEE. TODAY, I MADE A FRIEND. I'M NO LONGER ALONE.
THE END

CASA BLANCO

STORY/ART/LETTERS:
• DAVID DORMAN •
DIALOGUE:
• CRAIG BOLDMAN •
EDITOR:
• CAT YRONWODE •
COLORIST:
• RON COURTNEY •

SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER

LIFE ON EL BLANCO IS TOUGH, BUT THE REWARDS ARE GREAT-- IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO POKE THROUGH THAT MOON'S CRUST AT JUST THE RIGHT SPOT AND TAP INTO A VEIN OF SMAGMA 20.

SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUTTER

!!?!@!

THE CHANCES OF THAT OCCURING DECREASE DRAMATICALLY IF YOUR SMAGMA PUMP IS A WORN-DOWN, ANTIQUATED PILE OF CREAKING PISTONS AND RODS.

DAMN'D WEEGIES ARE SHOT! I'LL HAVE TO SEND'EM TO...

"SPUTTER-SPUTTER-SPUT-?" OH, LORD! I KNOW THAT SOUND..

IT'S BEEN SIX FRIGGING YEARS, ZOOT!! AREN'T YOU EVER GOING TO ADJUST THE CYLINDERS ON THAT FLOATMOBILE?

NO TRESSPASSING PROPERTY OF JAIME BERLIN

I'M NOT MECHANICALLY-MINDED LIKE YOU, BERLIN!

HOW MANY BARRELS OF SMAGMA ARE YOU PUMPING THESE DAYS?

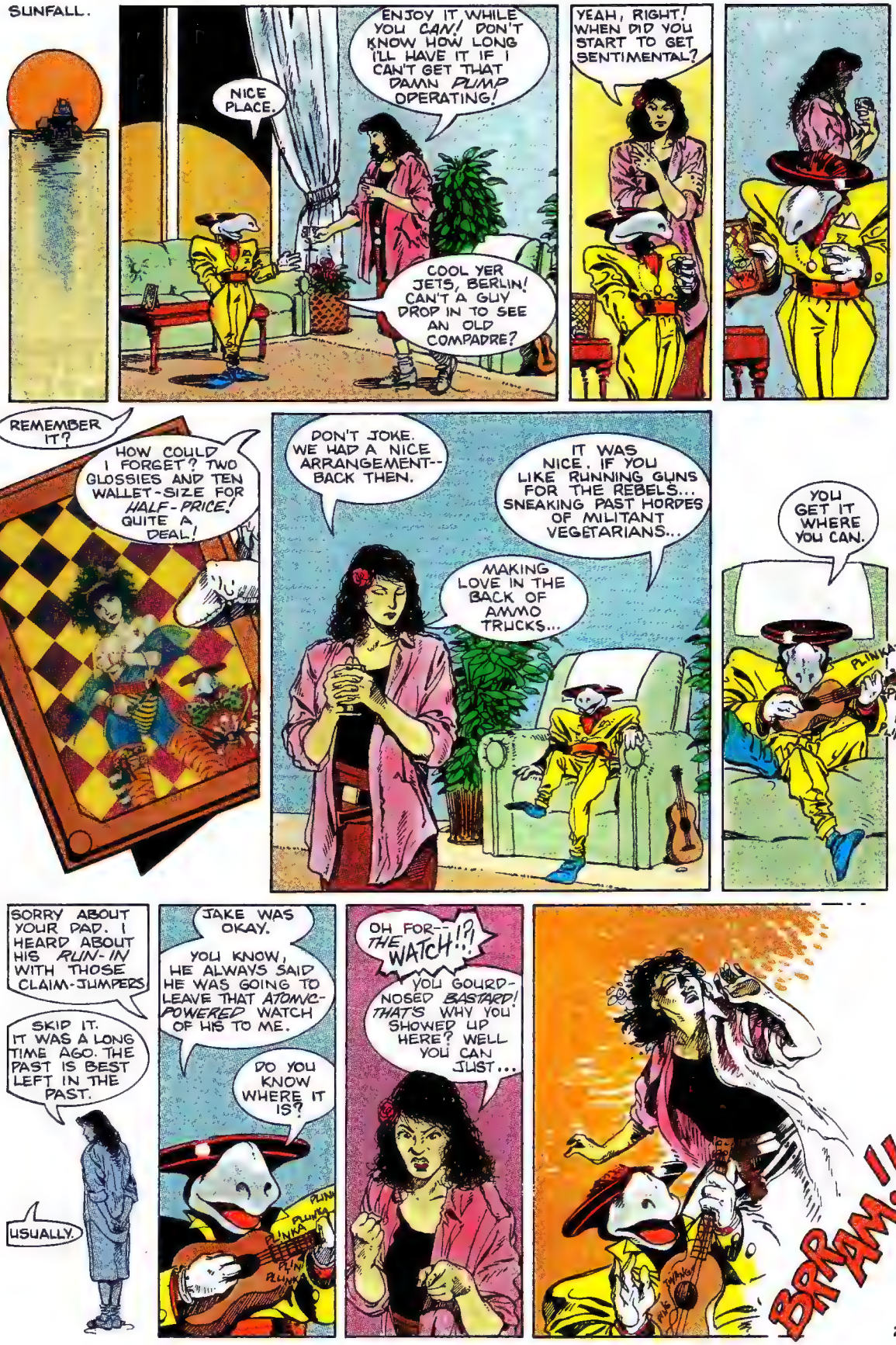
DON'T BE A WISE-BUTT, ZOOT! RUNNING A SMAGMA DRILL'S NOT A ONE-PERSON JOB, YOU KNOW! YOU LEFT DAD AND ME WHEN WE *NEEDED* YOU MOST, AND NOW *HE'S* GONE!

IT'S ALL I CAN DO JUST TO SQUEEZE A GRAM OF SMAGMA-20 OUT OF THIS STINKING DUSTPAN!

YOUR NOSTRILS STILL TWITCH WHEN YOU'RE MAD!

>SPUTTER! SPUTTER! SPUT!< SHITHEAD!

THAT'S VERY GOOD. CAN YOU DO A FREIGHT-FLOATER?


SUNFALL.
NICE PLACE.
ENJOY IT WHILE YOU CAN! DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'LL HAVE IT IF I CAN'T GET THAT DAMN PUMP OPERATING!
COOL YER JETS, BERLIN! CAN'T A GUY DROP IN TO SEE AN OLD COMPADRE?
YEAH, RIGHT! WHEN DID YOU START TO GET SENTIMENTAL?
REMEMBER IT?
HOW COULD I FORGET? TWO GLOSSIES AND TEN WALLET-SIZE FOR HALF-PRICE! QUITE A DEAL!
DON'T JOKE. WE HAD A NICE ARRANGEMENT-- BACK THEN.
IT WAS NICE. IF YOU LIKE RUNNING GUNS FOR THE REBELS... SNEAKING PAST HORDES OF MILITANT VEGETARIANS...
MAKING LOVE IN THE BACK OF AMMO TRUCKS...
YOU GET IT WHERE YOU CAN.
PLINKA-
SORRY ABOUT YOUR DAD. I HEARD ABOUT HIS RUN-IN WITH THOSE CLAIM-JUMPERS
SKID IT. IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. THE PAST IS BEST LEFT IN THE PAST.
USUALLY.
JAKE WAS OKAY.
YOU KNOW, HE ALWAYS SAID HE WAS GOING TO LEAVE THAT ATOMIC-POWERED WATCH OF HIS TO ME.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE IT IS?
PLINKA
OH FOR-- THE WATCH!?!
YOU GOURD-NOSED BASTARD! THAT'S WHY YOU SHOWED UP HERE? WELL YOU CAN JUST...
BRRAM!!

MY GOD, DID THE PUMP EXPLODE?
DOWN! IT'S GUNFIRE!
CREEP'S BEEN TRACKING ME SINCE SATURN'S MOONS. I'VE GOT A REP, YOU KNOW.
IT'S THE OLD STORY-- LOVE ME, LOVE MY GROUPIES! MAKES IT TOUGH TO STAND STILL FOR LONG!
COME ON OUT, ZOOT!... AND BRING THE WA...
BANGA-BANGA!
BANGA-BANGA-BANG!
SHEESH! YOU'VE GOTTEN SOFT SINCE THE OLD DAYS, ZOOT! I THINK I SEE A FEW BITS OF HIM THAT DON'T HAVE HOLES!
A COUPLE DOZEN WELL-PLACED WARNING SHOTS GENERALLY DO THE TRICK.
LISTEN ZOOT-- WHY DON'T YOU STAY A WHILE? I'VE MISSED THAT DAMN UKELELE OF YOURS.
YEAH, HONEY, I'VE MIBSED YOU TOO... SURE YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE WATCH?
SORRY.
SPUTTER SPUTTER SPUT SPUTTER SPUTTER
ME TOO... I'M OUT OF HERE.
SORRY.
THE END 3.

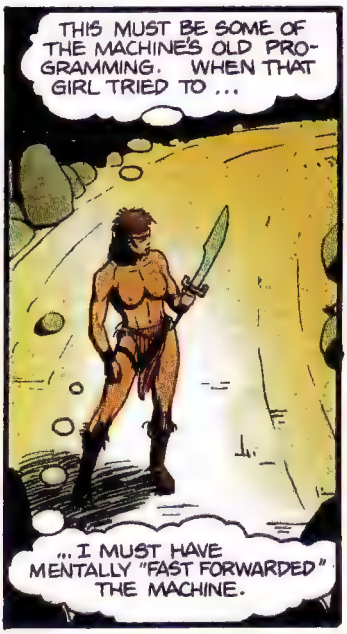
AT THREE O'CLOCK TODAY THE OFFICE TOOK IT'S TOLL. WENDY ANDERSON'S BODY HAS BEEN ON AUTOMATIC PILOT SINCE THEN.
TV GUIDE
IT'S BEEN A ROUGH DAY, AND THE SIGHT OF AN INCIPIENT BLOCK PARTY FORMING IN FRONT OF HER APARTMENT BUILDING DOESN'T DO MUCH FOR HER STATE OF MIND.
YOU KNOW I WON'T CALL THE COPS ABOUT THE NOISE, FREDDY. BUT THE NEIGHBORS...
THEY'RE ALL HERE! LOOSEN UP, WEN, JOIN THE FUN.
THANKS, BUT I'M A LITTLE TOO... TIRED. MAYBE NEXT TIME.
HER EXHAUSTION GIVES WAY TO A HEADACHE AS SOUNDS FROM THE PARTY CONTINUE TO THUD THROUGH HER WALLS, AND WENDY KNOWS THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO LEAVE THE FATIGUE, THE PAIN AND NOISE BEHIND.
DINNER WON'T BE READY FOR HALF AN HOUR. THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME TO TRY OUT OUR NEW TOY.
OH BOY, JAMAICA, HERE I COME!
ANOTHER MAN'S SHOES
Burgard & Beckum
1

Story. Tim Burgard Art/Letters: Chuck Beckum Colors: Steve Oliff

AT LUNCH WENDY WAS SHANGHEID BY HER ROOMMATE, JULIE, TO A LITTLE SECOND-HAND STORE WHERE JULIE HAD EARLIER DISCOVERED THE F.S. 300 HOME ENTERTAINMENT COMPUTER.
IT WAS USED, BUT STILL TOO EXPENSIVE FOR JULIE TO BUY, SO SHE THREW IN A MONTH OF DOING ALL THE HOUSEWORK IF WENDY WOULD GO IN ON IT TOO. A REAL BARGAIN.
STILL, WENDY ALMOST BACKED OUT OF THE DEAL WHEN SHE HEARD WHY THE MACHINE CAME SO CHEAP. APPARENTLY THE FIRST OWNER BECAME ADDICTED TO IT AND SPENT ALL HIS TIME PLUGGED IN. SOMETHING LIKE ALCOHOLISM, THE DEALER SAID. THE GUY LOST HIS JOB, HIS FAMILY, AND FINALLY, WAS COMMITED TO AN ASYLUM.
A BAD SCENE.
BUT STILL, AN F.S.300... IT WAS STATE-OF-THE-ART... AND WENDY WANTED ENTERTAINMENT AS MUCH AS JULIE DID.
AFTER ALL, EVERYBODY NEEDS TO RELAX AFTER A DAY AT THE OFFICE.
Qhhh... NO NOISE. NO PRESSURE. JUST...
AVAST YE BILGE RATS THAR BE THE CAP'N!
WHA...?
TH' SPOILS BE READY FOR YUR INSPECTION, CAPN' FLINT, SUR!
2

WHAT'S GOING ON?
WELL! HERE COMES OUR PRIZE PEARL NOW.
WHEN MY FATHER, THE VICEROY CATCHES YOU, HE'LL ...HE'LL...
FEISTY LITTLE BIT, EH CAPT--
AAAARGH!
Y'SLATTERN! I'LL CARVE YUR...
Ooooh!
Oh my God!
MY LORD CAPTAIN! PROTECT ME AND I AM YOURS TO TAKE.
TAKE ME!
NOOO!
3

NOOOoo
THE CAVE IS WARM AND WET. HER FURS STINK OF OLD SWEAT. WENDY IS SURPRISED SHE CAN SENSE THESE THINGS. THE FS300 IS CERTAINLY A TOP-OF-THE-LINE MACHINE.
GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF! THINK THIS THROUGH!

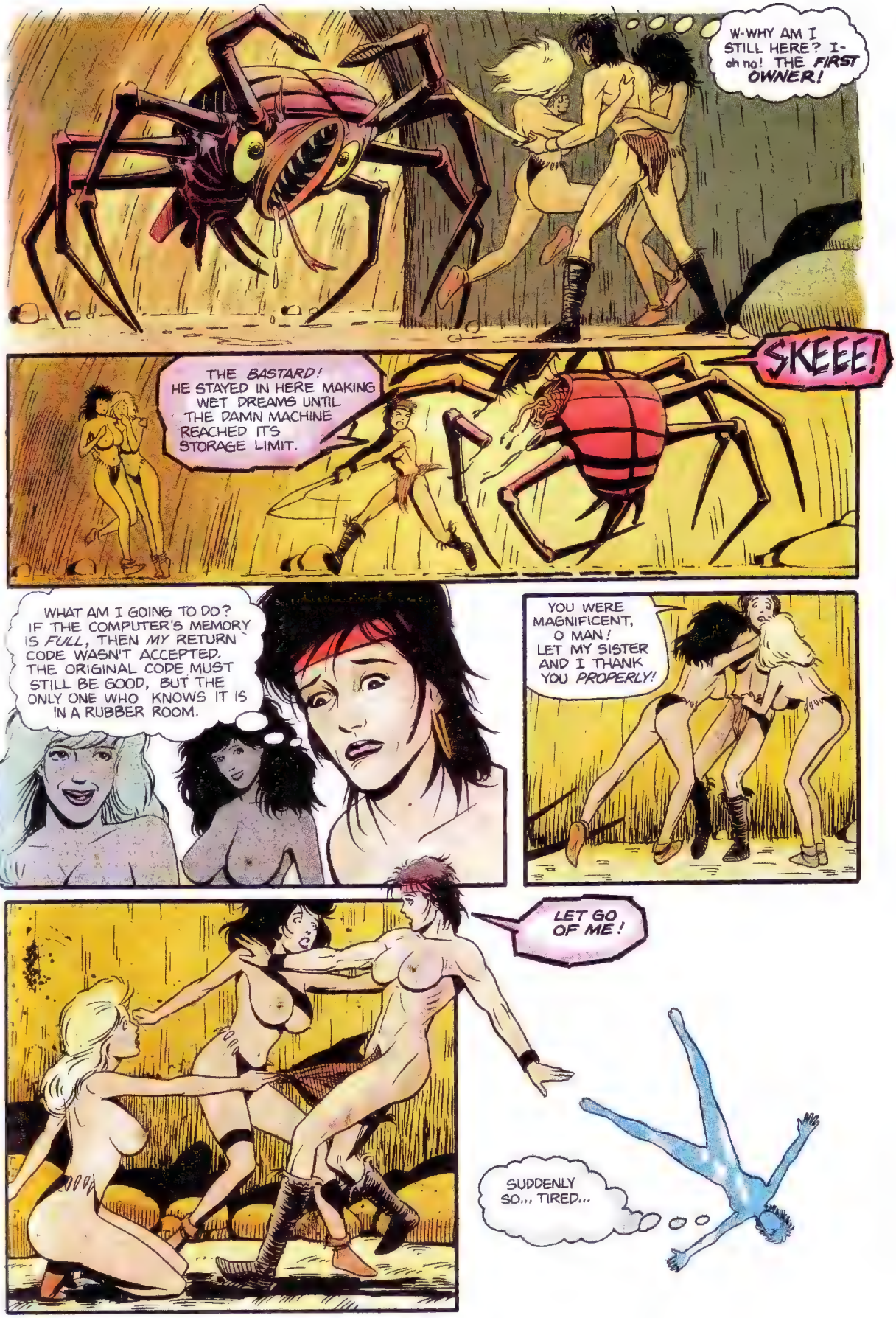

THIS MUST BE SOME OF THE MACHINE'S OLD PROGRAMMING. WHEN THAT GIRL TRIED TO ...
... I MUST HAVE MENTALLY "FAST FORWARDED" THE MACHINE.

THE SECOND SHOW'S ABOUT TO BEGIN. I BETTER USE THE CODE SIGNAL AND TURN THE MACHINE OFF.

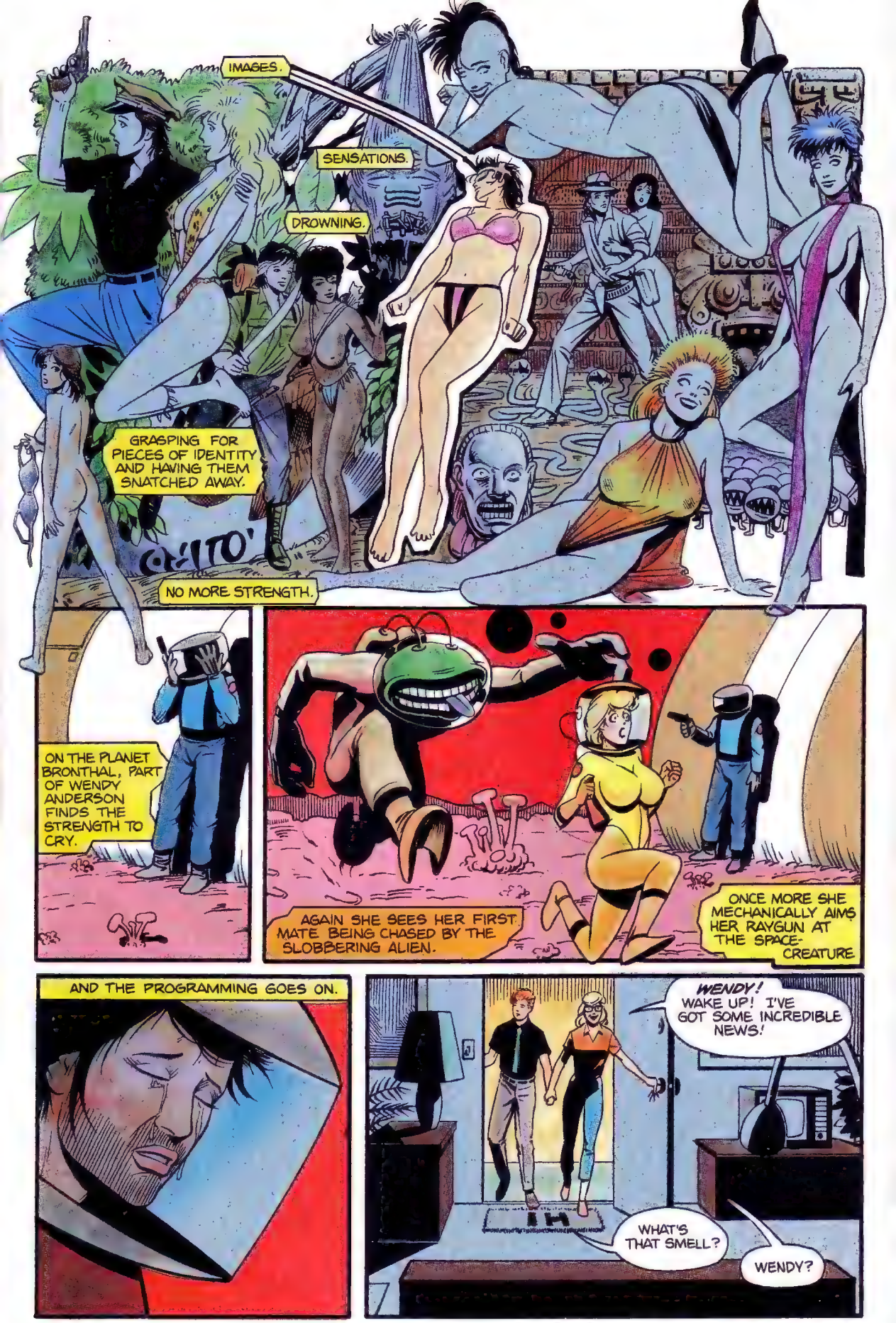
SSSSS
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!

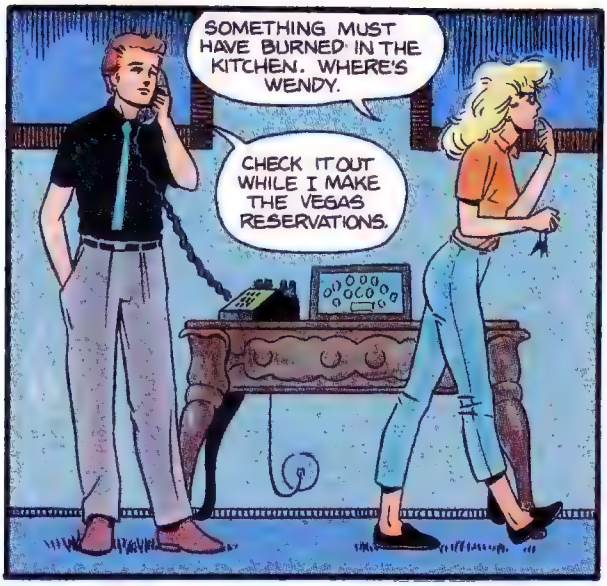
SSSSS
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!

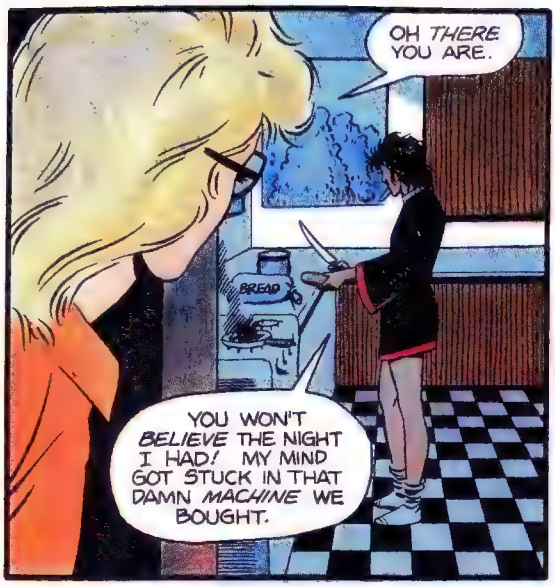
MY GOD! IM TRAPPED!


W-WHY AM I STILL HERE? I- oh no! THE FIRST OWNER!
SKEEE!
THE BASTARD! HE STAYED IN HERE MAKING WET DREAMS UNTIL THE DAMN MACHINE REACHED ITS STORAGE LIMIT.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? IF THE COMPUTER'S MEMORY IS FULL, THEN MY RETURN CODE WASN'T ACCEPTED. THE ORIGINAL CODE MUST STILL BE GOOD, BUT THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS IT IS IN A RUBBER ROOM.
YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT, O MAN! LET MY SISTER AND I THANK YOU PROPERLY!
LET GO OF ME!
SUDDENLY SO... TIRED...

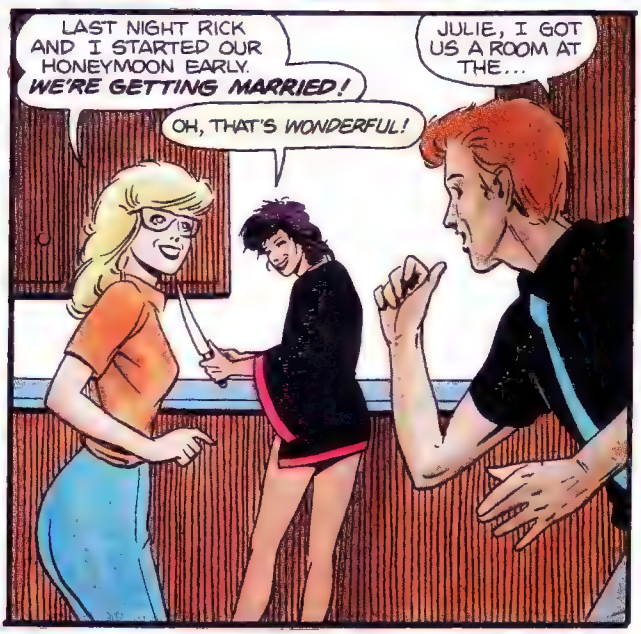
THE SUN IS WARM OVERHEAD. FROM SOMEWHERE NEAR COMES THE CLINKING OF SPURS.
IT WAS HARDER TO MOVE AHEAD THAT TIME. I CAN FEEL PARTS OF THAT LUNATIC IN HERE WITH ME TRYING TO MAKE ME PLAY THE GAME. IF I DON'T GET OUT OF HERE SOON, I'LL BE TOO TIRED TO RESIST.
SAY YER PRAYERS, SHERRIFF!
GOOD. IT'S JUST A STRAIGHT FORWARD GUNFIGHT WITH NO ASSAULT ON MY GENDER. AT LEAST...
YOO HOO! SHERRIFF!
DRILL THE DIRTY SNAKE, SHERRIFF!
SALOON
AND GAMBLING
SUNDAYS CHURCH SERVICES 6AM
IF YOUR PARTS ARE STILL ATTACHED AFTERWARD, MY GIRLS'LL SHOW YOU A REAL GOOD TIME.
A REAL GOOD TIME.
DRAW!
NO!
BAM!
BAM


IMAGES.
SENSATIONS.
DROWNING.
GRASPING FOR PIECES OF IDENTITY AND HAVING THEM SNATCHED AWAY.
NO MORE STRENGTH.
ON THE PLANET BRONTHAL, PART OF WENDY ANDERSON FINDS THE STRENGTH TO CRY.
AGAIN SHE SEES HER FIRST MATE BEING CHASED BY THE SLOBBERING ALIEN.
ONCE MORE SHE MECHANICALLY AIMS HER RAYGUN AT THE SPACE-CREATURE
AND THE PROGRAMMING GOES ON.
WENDY! WAKE UP! I'VE GOT SOME INCREDIBLE NEWS!
WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
WENDY?


SOMETHING MUST HAVE BURNED IN THE KITCHEN. WHERE'S WENDY.
CHECK IT OUT WHILE I MAKE THE VEGAS RESERVATIONS.


OH THERE YOU ARE.
BREAD
YOU WON'T BELIEVE THE NIGHT I HAD! MY MIND GOT STUCK IN THAT DAMN MACHINE WE BOUGHT.

MMM, THAT'S GOOD.
ANYWAY, I'D STILL BE STUCK IN THERE IF THE BAND AT FREDDIE'S PARTY HADN'T BLOWN OUT ALL THE FUSES IN THE BUILDING.
WELL I'VE GOT NEWS TOO!


LAST NIGHT RICK AND I STARTED OUR HONEYMOON EARLY. WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!
JULIE, I GOT US A ROOM AT THE...
OH, THAT'S WONDERFUL!

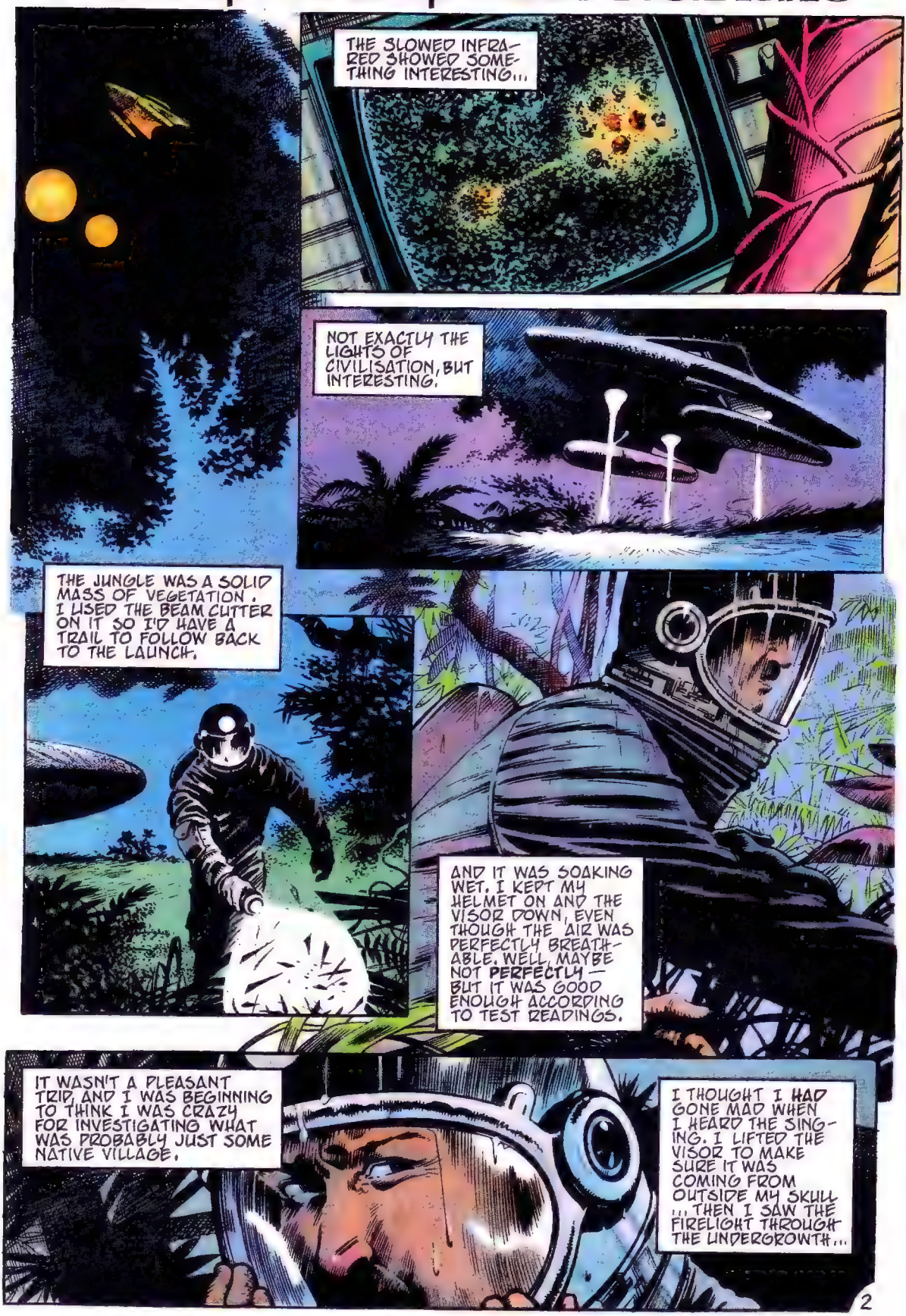
SHHK!

THE SCUM BE FISH-BAIT, ME TREASURE.
NOW YE BELONGS TO ME!

JOURNAL OF A SPACE TRAVELLER
17TH JULY 7.00 PM
TWENTY HOURS AGO I LOCKED INTO ORBIT AROUND A PLANET CALLED PARIS, WHICH ISN'T NAMED AFTER THE FRENCH CAPITAL BUT HONOURS A HERO OF THE TROJAN WARS— THE ONE WHO DISCOVERED THAT ACHILLES WASN'T SO PERFECT AFTER ALL.
THE SMALL AMOUNT OF DATA I HAD ON THE NATURE OF THE PLANET SHOWED ME THAT LARGE TRACTS OF IT WERE SUITABLE FOR HUMAN HABITATION. I WAS HOPING I WOULD FIND A HUMAN COMMUNITY DOWN THERE, THOUGH I HAD NO RECORDS OF AN OFFICIAL COLONIZATION HAVING TAKEN PLACE.
I TOOK OUT THE LAUNCH THAT NEEDED A HEAT SHIELD RENEWAL. I DON'T KNOW WHY— MAYBE I'M DEVELOPING A DEATH-WISH OR SOMETHING...
ANYWAY, IT HELD OUT. I MADE A MENTAL NOTE TO DISCIPLINE MYSELF MORE IN THE FUTURE.

WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY DAVID LLOYD • LETTERING: STEVE CRADDOCK • COLOURING: CHRIS MILLER

the soft airs of thine own land


THE SLOWED INFRA-RED SHOWED SOMETHING INTERESTING...
NOT EXACTLY THE LIGHTS OF CIVILISATION, BUT INTERESTING.
THE JUNGLE WAS A SOLID MASS OF VEGETATION. I USED THE BEAM CUTTER ON IT SO I'D HAVE A TRAIL TO FOLLOW BACK TO THE LAUNCH.
AND IT WAS SOAKING WET. I KEPT MY HELMET ON AND THE VISOR DOWN, EVEN THOUGH THE AIR WAS PERFECTLY BREATHABLE. WELL, MAYBE NOT **PERFECTLY** — BUT IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH ACCORDING TO TEST READINGS.
IT WASN'T A PLEASANT TRIP, AND I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I WAS CRAZY FOR INVESTIGATING WHAT WAS PROBABLY JUST SOME NATIVE VILLAGE.
I THOUGHT I **HAD** GONE MAD WHEN I HEARD THE SINGING. I LIFTED THE VISOR TO MAKE SURE IT WAS COMING FROM OUTSIDE MY SKULL ... THEN I SAW THE FIRELIGHT THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH...

OH DANNY BOY, THE PIPES, THE PIPES ARE CAAAAALLLLING...
FROM GLEN TO GLEN, AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE....
...'TIS I'LL BE THERE, IN SUNSHINE OR IN SHADOW...
DEAR GOD...
HE SANG 'DANNY BOY' SIX MORE TIMES BEFORE THEY LET HIM FINISH.
THANK YOU, MUSIC LOVERS. SORRY- CAN'T STOP FOR AUTOGRAPHS.

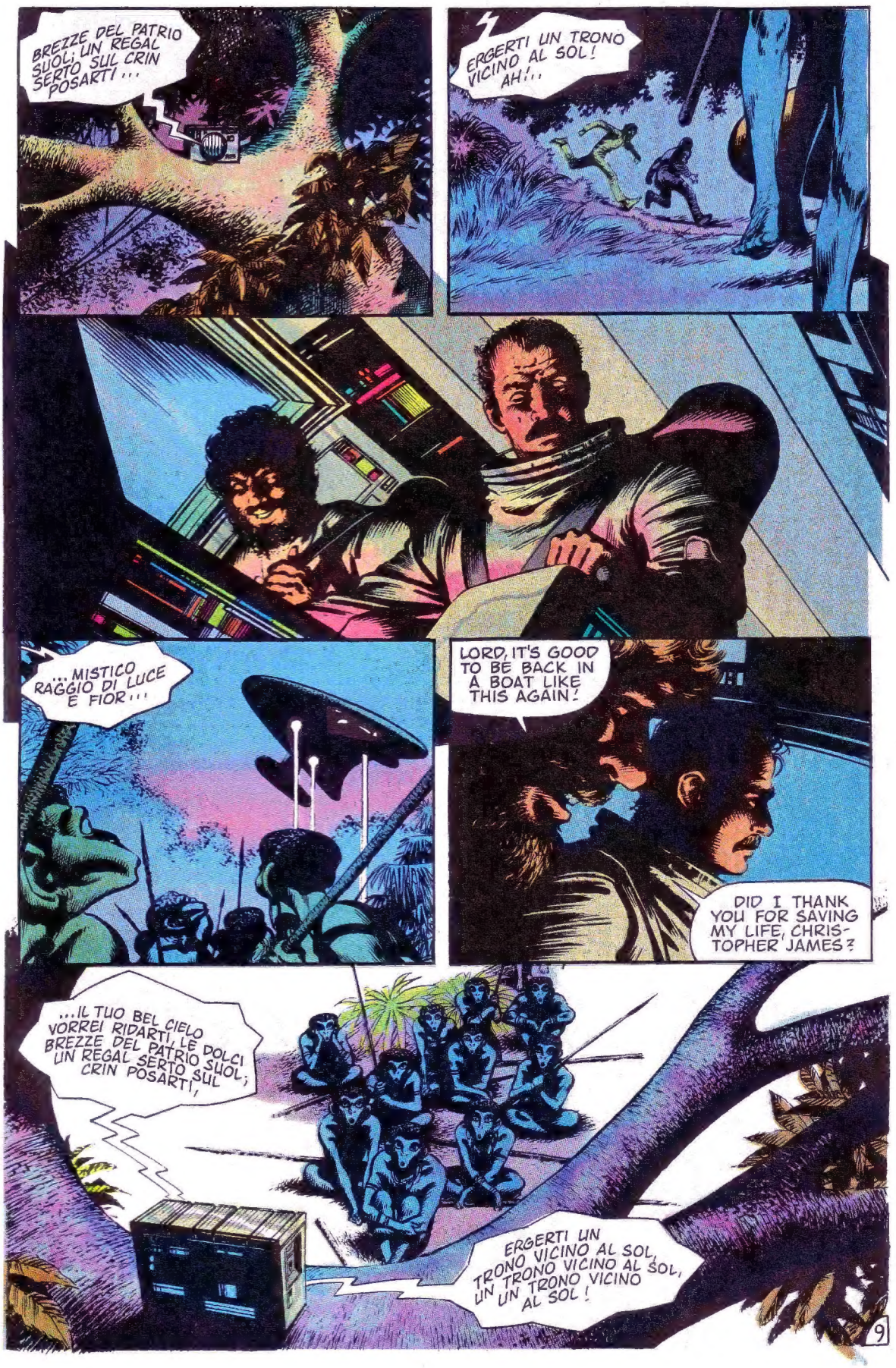
ALL RIGHT, YOU LITTLE BASTARDS, TAKE IT EASY! =COUGH=
WELL, I'VE HEARD SOME BAD SINGING IN MY TIME, BUT HE WAS ABOUT THE WORST. IT WAS AN IRONIC ENCOUNTER, CONSIDERING I'D BROUGHT A VERDI TAPE OUT WITH ME FOR COMPANY... BUT I WASN'T THERE AS A TALENT SCOUT.
I WAITED UNTIL THE VILLAGE WAS ASLEEP — OR AS ASLEEP AS IT WAS LIKELY TO GET...
WHAT — ?
SHHH!

YOU CAN TELL ME HOW YOU GOT HERE LATER, BUT I THINK WE SHOULD LEAVE NOW.
AMEN TO THAT! ≥COUGH≤
WHAT'S THE NAME, MISTER?
CHRISTOPHER JAMES. WHAT'S YOURS?
DON'T YOU KNOW?
SHOULD I?
YOU'RE NOT FROM RESCUE GROUP?
NO.
≥COUGH≤ I **THOUGHT** IT WAS TAKING TOO LONG FOR THEM TO COME, HOW DID YOU —
WHAT'S **THAT**?
A RED LIGHT— WE HAVE TO STOP FOR A WHILE. THAT'S THE HUNTING CRY OF THE **RANGI**... PRETTY SPOOKY WHEN YOU HEAR IT FOR THE FIRST TIME, EH?
THEY HUNT IN PACKS. ONE SCARES THE PREY INTO RUNNING, THE OTHERS MOVE IN FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO CATCH IT... WE'LL KNOW WHEN THEY CATCH SOMETHING — ≥COUGH≤ THEY'RE NOISY EATERS.
THAT'S WHEN WE CAN MAKE A MOVE... HOW FAR IS YOUR LAUNCH?

ABOUT TEN MINUTES AWAY IF WE CAN STAY ON THE BEAM PATH I CUT.
SO HOW DID YOU GET IN THIS MESS, ER...
KENNEDY, PAT KENNEDY... SHIPWRECK. THE WARNING SENSORS BROKE DOWN AND WE CAUGHT A METEOR SHOWER. WE HAD TO ABANDON SHIP.
ONLY CHUCK MILSON AND ME GOT HERE—BUT THE RANGI GOT MILSON. I —
ROWR! GRARGH!
THAT'S IT, THEY'VE CAUGHT THEIR DINNER. ≥COUGH≤ LET'S GO BEFORE THEY LOOK FOR A SECOND COURSE.
THAT'S A NASTY COUGH YOU'VE GOT THERE.
IT'S A FUNGUS, A PARASITE, LIVES IN THE LUNGS, I FORGET WHAT IT'S CALLED NOW. ≥COUGH≤
IT JUST COMES TO STAY IF YOU'RE HERE A MONTH WITHOUT AN AIR FILTER. SPACEX IS TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO BEAT IT SO WE CAN COLONIZE WITHOUT WALKING AROUND IN MASKS ALL THE TIME.
HOW IS OLD MOTHER EARTH, BY THE WAY?
HOLD IT. SHHH.
WHAT IS IT?
OHH, NO...
UP AHEAD, THERE ARE SOME NATIVES GUARDING THE HEAD OF THE PATH. WE'LL HAVE TO CUT ANOTHER PATH OUT AROUND THEM.
WELL, ≥COUGH≤ THAT BRINGS BACK BAD MEMORIES...
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
WELL—

"I WAS FIXING THE MAYDAY BEACON OF THE LAUNCH, SINGING TO MYSELF. DANNY BOY'S THE ONLY DITTY I KNOW ALL THE WORDS TO... THEN I GOT THE FEELING I WAS BEING WATCHED..."
OH, DANNY BOY...
"WE DIDN'T KNOW A LOT ABOUT PARIS. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE NEW DISCOVERIES – STILL WAITING FOR FULL EXPLORATION TEAMS TO BE ASSIGNED TO THEM. PARISIANS WERE STILL AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY."
"IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY WERE SO EXCITED ABOUT. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A NATURAL DESIRE TO PUT ME IN THEIR COOK POT – BUT IT WAS MORE EXOTIC THAN THAT... THEY LIKED MY SINGING. IN FACT, THEY LOVED IT."
"THEY KEPT ME FED, LOCKED ME UP IN THAT HUT, AND LET ME OUT EVERY NIGHT TO ENTERTAIN THEM AROUND THE CAMPFIRE."
"I THOUGHT THEY'D GET TIRED OF ME EVENTUALLY, BUT THEY DIDN'T... IN FACT, THE OPPOSITE HAPPENED..."
"I BECAME A MAJOR ATTRACTION... THEY INVITED NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES TO HEAR ME... I WAS SCARED MY VOICE WOULD GIVE UP – ESPECIALLY WITH THIS PARASITE THING I'VE GOT. BUT SOMEHOW IT DIDN'T — EVEN THE COUGH LEFT ME ALONE WHILE I WAS SINGING."
LISTEN, JAMES, ≥COUGH≤ IS THAT BEAM CUTTER ADJUSTABLE? THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GO AWAY AND WE CAN'T SIT HERE ALL NIGHT, NOW CAN WE?
EVEN IF IT WAS ADJUSTABLE – WHICH IT ISN'T – I WOULDN'T USE IT AS A WEAPON, KENNEDY. I DON'T BELIEVE IN MURDER UNLESS THERE'S NO ALTERNATIVE – AND EVEN THEN I'M NOT CONVINCED.
"AND THE ONLY SONG I KNOW IS DANNY BOY, AND THEY KEPT ON WANTING TO HEAR IT."
"THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT I WAS AND A BLOODY BUDGERIGAR WAS THAT THEY DIDN'T KEEP ME LOCKED UP IN A CAGE..."

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? ASK THE LITTLE BASTARDS NICELY IF WE CAN GO?
NO.
WAIT HERE.
HE DIDN'T LIKE ME LEAVING HIM WITHOUT EXPLANATION. I GOT THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION HE THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO RUN OUT ON HIM OR SOMETHING. HE WAS RELIEVED WHEN I GOT BACK.
WHAT DID YOU DO? ≥COUGH≤
WAIT AND SEE.
CELESTE AÏDA...
FORMA DIVINA...
MISTICO SERTO DI LUCE E FIOR
GLORY BE.
DEL MIO PENSIERO TU SEI REGINA, TU DI MIA VITA SEI LO SPLENDOR.
IL TUO BEL CIELO VORREI RIDARTI, LE DOLCI...
SPACEMAN


BREZZE DEL PATRIO SUOL; UN REGAL SERTO SUL CRIN POSARTI...
ERGERTI UN TRONO VICINO AL SOL! AH!..
...MISTICO RAGGIO DI LUCE E FIOR!..
LORD, IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK IN A BOAT LIKE THIS AGAIN!
DID I THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE, CHRISTOPHER JAMES?
...IL TUO BEL CIELO VORREI RIDARTI, LE DOLCI BREZZE DEL PATRIO SUOL; UN REGAL SERTO SUL CRIN POSARTI,
ERGERTI UN TRONO VICINO AL SOL, UN TRONO VICINO AL SOL, UN TRONO VICINO AL SOL!

OH! =COUGH= G-GOD, I CAN'T —
WHAT IS IT!?
CAN'T... BREATHE... GAHHH...
WHY! WHAT'S HAPPENING?...
I QUICKLY PUT THE LAUNCH ON AUTO-PILOT — WE'D JUST REACHED SUFFICIENT ALTITUDE FOR ME TO DO THAT — AND I GAVE HIM OXYGEN... IT WAS THE WORST THING I COULD HAVE DONE...
BUT THEN EVEN THE BEST THING I COULD HAVE DONE AT THE TIME WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY GOOD TO HIM.
WHEN I GOT HIM IN THE MEDIC ROOM ON THE SHIP AND RAN THE AUTO-DOC OVER HIS BODY, IT SHOWED ME WHAT HAD KILLED HIM. I HAVEN'T HAD ANY REAL MEDICAL TRAINING SO IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO UNDERSTAND.
IT WAS THE PARASITE. IT NEEDED SOMETHING IN THE AIR OF PARIS TO SURVIVE, AS WELL AS THE WARM COMPARTMENTS OF KENNEDY'S LUNGS.
WHEN IT COULDN'T GET IT ANY MORE, IT DIED. AND WHEN IT DIED, IT CONTRACTED, AND KENNEDY'S LUNGS CONTRACTED WITH IT — FOLDING CLOSED LIKE A PAIR OF EMPTY BELLOWS...
AS I'VE SAID, I COULDN'T HAVE DONE ANYTHING FOR HIM ON THE LAUNCH BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW WHY HE WAS DYING, BUT I STILL HAVE A TERRIBLE FEELING OF GUILT...
AIRLOCK 3
JUST BEFORE HE STARTED GASPING FOR BREATH, FOR ONE FLEETING MOMENT, AND WITHOUT MUCH HUMOUR, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "IS HE WORTH THE LOSS OF THE ONLY VERDI TAPE I HAD?"

=END=